Introduction of four zonal offices

4087. SHRI B.J. PANDA:
MS. PRAMILA BOHIDAR:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Railways plan to introduce four zonal offices to improve coordination between functioning of a cluster of railway divisions and the Railway Board;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) what are the details of such zonal offices that would serve the ECoR and how far would this help to improve its efficiency both in the passenger and freight movement on this railway system?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Special status to trains

4088. SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether some trains, including the Samjhauta Express, are accorded special status;

(b) if so, the details thereof indicating the features signifying special status;

(c) whether lives of several passengers on board the Samjhauta Express on 18th February, 2007, killed due to the fire following bomb blasts, could be saved had the coaches been fire-retardant;

(d) whether Government had years ago decided to introduce fire-retardant coaches as passengers' safety measures;

(e) if so, the details thereof indicating current status of the said decision;

(f) whether the affected coaches had any kind of fire-retardant features;

(g) if so, the details thereof; and

(h) if not, reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Fire retardant measures can provide only limited relief in somewhat increasing the time available for evacuation of passengers.

(d) to (h) Enhancing fire worthiness of coach is a continuous exercise. Efforts are being made to bring about continual improvement in this area by development of more items of furnishings with fire retardant properties and also by developing additional sources for manufacture and supply of fire retardant materials for coaches.

Gauge conversion between Trichy and Manamadurai

4089. SHRI SU. THIRUNAVUKKARASAR: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) by when the broad gauge work between Trichy and Manamadurai would be completed; and

(b) what is the amount allotted for the year 2007-08?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) On Tiruchirappalli-Manamadurai gauge conversion project, work on Tiruchirappalli-Pudukottai-Karaikudi section has already been completed and the balance section is targeted for completion during 2007-08.

(b) An outlay of Rs. 80 crore has been provided for this project during 2007-08.

Freight handling potential

4090. SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of optimum freight traffic handling potential of Indian Railways as on March 31, 2007 *vis-a-vis* 2007-08 as target;